

# Technical education keeps state growing

**Today's meeting in Torrance among business and education leaders and Gov. Schwarzenegger is a good time to discuss promoting more vocational education.**

**By Victoria Bradshaw**

It's fitting that Torrance, the sixth-largest city in Los Angeles County, will serve as a gathering place today for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, lawmakers and California's education and business leaders to highlight the importance of career technical education, or CTE, in California.

CTE, often referred to as vocational education, prepares thousands of Southern California youth for successful careers and bright futures. Today's CTE summit at ACE Clearwater Enterprises will help broaden the scope to include many more students and shape the future of this important work force resource.

Schwarzenegger's vision of CTE programs includes career preparation for high-growth, high-wage and high-skilled occupations that meet work force demands for decades to come.

The CTE programs are focused on the skills needed to be successful in the occupations demanded by California's businesses. Consider this: By the year 2014, these four industries will have some of the highest demands for skilled workers: infrastructure/construction (which includes goods movement and transportation logistics), manufacturing, health care and automotive. In the infrastructure/construction industry, the median hourly wage range is \$15 for welders and cutters to \$42 for construction managers. The CTE programs that would help prepare for such a work force are relevant, as well as flexible enough, to adapt to the changing industries and technologies required to ensure both the individual's success and that of California's growing and dynamic economy.

Most importantly, the governor's CTE programs allow for individuals to choose to go back to school to earn a degree or to update their skills, assuring their future success as California's economy adapts and changes to remain competitive in the global economy.

For example, a recent Workforce Investment Act grant awarded to Managed Career Solutions will train 176 18- to 30-year-olds as emergency medical technicians -- the fourth-highest job-growth occupation in Los Angeles County. Approximately 142 participants will be placed in employment as EMTs and will be eligible for career-ladder opportunities as paramedics and firefighters.

CTE also fills a real need, both for individuals and for California's businesses. Significant skilled labor shortages already exist in some of California's industries, and as our economy and populations grow and our baby boomers retire, those skill shortages will turn into a work force crisis -- such as the health-care field, where it's estimated there will be 109,000 job openings by 2014.

Lastly, CTE is not limited to K-12 or community colleges. Alternative programs are available through sources such as California's Employment Training Panel, which has provided \$23 million in training funds since 2005 to California companies for CTE.

For example, in February, Los Angeles-based Century Housing Corp., a non-profit entity, was awarded funds to provide pre-apprenticeship training for the construction industry with hourly wages ranging from \$10 to \$21. Century will train 100 workers in such skills as estimating, blueprint reading, basic carpentry, plumbing and electrical techniques, concrete forms and safety. These workers will go on to provide not only for themselves and their families, but they will use their skills to help build affordable homes in the Los Angeles area to provide housing opportunities for other area families.

Clearly, CTE is an important part of California's economic future, and I'm proud to be in Torrance today highlighting its importance.

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